

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bear River Massacreother names/site number Massacre at Boa Ogoi, Battle of Bear River

2. Location

street & number U.S. Highway 91☐ not for publicationcity, town Preston☒ vicinity Banida Quadstate Idahocode IDcounty Franklincode 041zip code 83237

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☒ public-local
☒ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

112

Noncontributing

12 buildings (5 farmsteads)7 sites2 structures (3 roads

objects 2 power lines

Total 1 canal & 1 gravel

pit)

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 1

Name of related multiple property listing:

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Site of Indian Village

Battle site

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

irrigated farms, agricultural
fields

animal facilities

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY

The site's major topographic features in January 1863, as today, are Bear River, Battle Creek (in 1863 known as Beaver Creek), Wayland Hot Springs, the Bear River bottoms (meadows), the bluffs bounding the Bear River bottoms and Battle Creek, and Cedar Point. All these features were important to the Northwestern Shoshonis' choice of this site for the winter encampment of Bear Hunter and his people, the attack by the Army, and the ensuing massacre.

DESCRIPTION

o Bear River--The river, with its crystal-clear waters, meanders through the area, flowing from northeast to southwest, until it reaches Wayland Hot Springs, where the course changes abruptly to the south. The river is about 175 feet across and, in the meanders, small islands divide the river into two channels. The river, except during the spring run-off and following cloudbursts, averages three to four feet deep, but there are deep holes where the water is overhead in depth.

o Battle (Beaver) Creek--A confluent of Bear River, this stream heads a number of miles northeast of the proposed National Historic Landmark. Battle Creek debouches into the Bear River bottoms through a hollow trending from northwest to southeast. After coming out into the bottom, the stream, as it bears off to the south to discharge into Bear River downstream from today's U.S. 91 Highway bridge, flows through a ravine bounded on the east by a cutbank. In 1863 the ravine was screened by a dense growth of willows.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D NHL Criterion 1

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

National Register Significance:

19th Century

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

Military

NHL Significance:

X. Western Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898

C. Military-Aboriginal American Contact and Conflict

5. The Western Mountains

Significant Person

Period of Significance

July 1862-Autumn 1863

1932

Significant Dates

January 29, 1863

1932

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The Bear River Massacre Site, the location of a desperate and bloody tragedy that resulted from 25 years of hostilities between the Northwestern Shoshonis--driven to desperation by loss of their traditional sources of food and lifeways--and the California Volunteers, is deemed to be nationally significant because it possesses "exceptional values in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history...." The site also possesses "a high degree of integrity of location, setting, feeling and association."

In this respect, the Bear River Massacre Site, as the scene of the bloodiest massacre, or "promiscuous wholesale slaughter," of Native Americans to take place in the West in the years between 1848 and 1891, meets one of the criteria for designation as a National Historic Landmark:

(1) It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with ... the broad patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of these patterns may be gained.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Western Historian Don Russell in a July 1973 article in The American West titled, "How Many Indians Were Killed? White Man Versus Red Man; The Fact and the Legend," focuses on confrontations between the U.S. Military and vigilante forces and Native Americans in the vast trans-Mississippi region. On doing so, Russell accepted the definition of a "massacre" as being "a promiscuous wholesale slaughter, especially of those who can make

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

National Register of Historic Place
Washington, D.C.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1691 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	426000	466740
C	12	422740	4661340
E	12	423760	4666760

	Zone	Easting	Northing
B	12	426000	4664320
D	12	422720	4665520

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian & Merle Wells, former Idaho SHPO</u>
organization	<u>NPS-History Division</u>
street & number	<u>1100 L St. NW</u>
city or town	<u>Washington</u>
date	<u>1/30/90</u>
telephone	<u>(202) 343-8163</u>
state	<u>DC</u>
zip code	<u>20013</u>

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o Wayland Hot Springs--The hot springs, on the west bank of Bear River, made this area a popular winter campground for the Northwestern Shoshonis.

o Bear River Bottoms (Meadows)--The bottoms through which the river meanders vary from three-quarters to a mile across. Near the river bank there were willows and deciduous trees that had shed their leaves for the winter. Between those trees and the Battle Creek ravine in 1863 was a meadow.

o Bluffs and Benches--The area of interest south and east of Bear River finds a steep line of bluffs rising from a mean height of 4500 feet above sea level to 4720 feet, inside of 600 to 800 feet of linear distance. The bluffs and the bench beyond toward the southeast were, in 1863, grown up in prairie grasses and sagebrush.

On the north side of Bear River, the escarpment--except downstream from today's highway bridge--is farther back from the river, and, discounting the area where Battle Creek debouches into the bottoms, is not as steep as the bluffs on the river's south side. Once up onto the escarpment, the prairie grass and sagebrush-covered north bench rolls away toward Little Mountain.

Battle (Beaver) Creek debouches through a steep-sided hollow, as does Deep Creek, which bounds the study area on the west.

o Cedar Point--This is the steep bluff overlooking from the west the area where Battle (Beaver) Creek emerges out onto the Bear River bottoms. Here the escarpment, in a linear distance of 550 feet, rises 200 feet.

Cultural features contemporary with the massacre include the Soldiers' Ford, the Village Site, and the Montana Trail. These are located as follows:

o Soldiers' Ford--There are two possible sites for the ford used by the Californians to cross Bear River to attack the village. The first of these is at the sharp bend in the river 3000 feet upstream from the U.S. Highway 91 bridge. The second is 3000 feet farther upstream at a site due east of the Pioneer Women's Historical Marker.

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o Northwestern Shoshoni Village Site--The 70 lodges occupied by Bear Hunter's and Sagwich's people were sited on either side of Battle (Beaver) Creek, extending south, from where the stream debouched into the Bear River bottom, for 300-400 yards. Bear Hunter's lodge was on the west side of the creek, 400 to 500 feet northwest of the Pioneer Women's Historical Monument.

The bodies of the several hundred Shoshonis killed on January 29, 1863, were left by the soldiers where they fell, a prey to wolves and magpies. Capt. James L. Fisk, in the autumn of 1863, visited the scene and wrote, "Many of the skeltons of the Indians yet remained on the ground, their bones scattered by wolves."

o Montana Trail--The road from Salt Lake City to the Montana mining camps passed through the area from east to west, skirting the escarpment at the foot of Cedar Point.

There are also cultural features subsequent to those associated with the massacre. In addition to roads giving access to the homes of farmers and ranchers, these roads have passed or pass through the study area. They are:

o U.S. Highway 91--This improved hard surface road crosses Bear River downstream from the Soldiers' Ford and passes east of the village site as it continues north and west 57 miles to Pocatello. This is a noncontributing resource, as is the highway bridge.

o Gravel County Road--This road parallels the West Cache Canal and is a noncontributing resource.

o The former alignment of the Utah and Northern Railroad can be traced through the study area. It crossed Bear River several hundred feet above the Highway 91 bridge and paralleled, to the east, today's U.S. 91 to the site of the Pioneer Women's Historical Marker, near which it crossed U.S. 91 and continued north and west up Battle Creek hollow. While this trace has significance, it does not contribute to the site's national significance.

o West Cache Canal--This ditch, paralleling the escarpment's western fringe on the Bear River bottoms, provides water for irrigation purposes and is a noncontributing resource.

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o Pioneer Women's Historical Marker--This rock and concrete monument, with plaques dedicated on September 5, 1932, was erected by the Franklin County Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Cache Valley Council, Boy Scouts of America, and the Utah Pioneer Trails and Landmarks Association. It is located east of U.S. 91 near Battle Creek and identifies the site. In 1956 the "Battle Creek" marker was rededicated and a second plaque added to the opposite side by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers. This monument is a contributing resource.

Within the study area, there are a number of other noncontributing resources. These are homes and improvements, including irrigation ditches, fences, fields, etc., made by the local residents to support their farming and ranching activities. They have have, however, limited impact on the historic scene.

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little resistance." Within this context, Russell next identified and reviewed five massacres of Native Americans that "have received the most attention from historians and which produced the most casualties." [1]

First in time and synonymous with horror was Colorado's infamous Sand Creek Massacre of November 19, 1864, when the "fighting preacher" Col. John M. Chivington and his Colorado Volunteers killed 130 Cheyennes, "two-thirds of them women and children." Chivington subsequently wrote that, several days before the attack on the Indians, he met in Denver with Brig. Gen. Patrick E. Connor, who told him:

I think from the temper of the men that you have and all I can learn that you will give these Indians a most terrible threshing if you catch them, and if it was in the mountains, and you had them in a canon, and your troops at one end of it and the Bear river at the other, as I had the Pi-Utes [Shoshoni], you could catch them, but I am afraid on these plains you won't do it. [2]

The second massacre of Native Americans identified by Russell was the "battle" of the Washita, November 27, 1868, when Lt. Col. George A. Custer and his troopers of the 7th U.S. Cavalry attacked Black Kettle's village, on the Washita River in present Oklahoma, killing some 103 Cheyenne warriors and a number of women and children. The next such major episode occurred on January 23, 1870, on the Marias River in Montana Territory, where Maj. Eugene M. Baker and his 2nd U.S. Cavalry killed 173 Piegans, 120 men and 53 women and children. Then, the next year, at Camp Grant, Arizona Territory, on April 20, 1871, 170 vigilantes assailed and killed some 150 Aravaipa Apaches. The last and most notorious massacre cited by Russell took place at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on December 29, 1890. Here 84 Sioux men, 44 women, and 18 children--a total of 146--were killed by troops of the 7th U.S. Cavalry and their four howitzers. Russell's "reasonable total" of Indian dead in the five massacres was 615. [3]

As Western Historian Brigham Madsen has noted in his heralded publication, The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre, "The Affair at Bear River" on January 29, 1863, was not listed by Western Historian Russell, "although it resulted in more casualties than any of the five" he described. "The reasonable figure of at least 280 Shoshoni deaths at Bear River makes the massacre one of the most significant Indian disasters in Western American History."

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Brigham Madsen has concluded that the Bear River Massacre has been largely forgotten or glossed over by historians and the general public, because:

(a) The Mormons have not been "overanxious in highlighting and approving slaughter of Indian men, women, and children."

(b) Bear River, occurring six years after the Mountain Meadow Massacre, the less "said about Mormon exultance over another wholesale killing of innocents the better...."

(c) There has been a change in historical perspectives. Western Historian Hubert H. Bancroft, writing in 1890, 27 years after Bear River, observed, "Had the ... [Indians] committed this deed it would pass into history as butchery or a massacre."

(d) Although the engagement at Bear River was big news in Utah and California, the story did not attract much attention in the rest of the nation. The big Eastern and Midwestern newspapers and illustrated magazines, as well as their readers, were engrossed with Civil War headlines and feature stories. For example, E.B. Long, in his much cited encyclopedic The Civil War Day by Day, An Almanac, 1861-1865, limits his entry referencing the massacre to these words, "Federal troops defeated the Bannock [sic] tribe of Indians in an engagement at Bear River or Bear Creek in Utah Terr." [4]

NARRATIVE

A. Colonel Connor and His California Brigade Reestablish a Military Presence Among the Saints

1. The March East

The Civil War confronted the War Department and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs with many vexing problems. Among the most urgent of these was providing for the security of the Overland Mail and Telegraph Route and the California and Oregon Trails across Nevada and Utah and, after 1862, Idaho Territories. In the weeks after the April 12, 1861, bombardment and capture of Fort Sumter and the battles of First Manassas and Wilson's Creek, troops of the Regular Army which had patrolled these travel routes and communication lines were called east to help preserve the Union against Confederate armies. To reoccupy Nevada and Utah posts would be the task of a force commanded by Col. Patrick Edward Connor. Born in County Kerry, Ireland, the 41-year-old Connor had emigrated to the

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United States with his parents as a child. A veteran of the Second Seminole and Mexican Wars, the hot-tempered Connor was a Stockton businessman, when, in September 1861, he was named colonel of the 3d California Volunteer Infantry. [5]

Colonel Connor received his marching orders from Brig. Gen. George Wright, who, from his San Francisco headquarters, commanded the vast Department of the Pacific that included much of the United States west of the Continental Divide. Connor's 3d California Infantry and a battalion of the 2d California Cavalry, more than 1,000 strong, marched eastward from Stockton by detachments during the summer and autumn of 1862. After crossing the High Sierras, Connor detached a company of infantry and one of cavalry to man Fort Churchill in the Carson Valley. This post had been established in 1860 at the time of the Paiute outbreak. In eastern Nevada, he halted to build Fort Ruby and dropped off two companies of infantry. Arriving in Great Salt Lake Valley, the Californians first reoccupied Fort Crittenden (formerly Camp Floyd), some 40 miles south of Salt Lake City, then in late October relocated to a bench fronting the Wasatch Mountains and commanding Salt Lake City. There they established Camp Douglas. [6]

2. The Soldiers Move Out

Colonel Conner, upon his arrival in Utah Territory, found many of the Shoshonis, Bannocks, and Utes determined to protect their lands against interlopers; the mail and telegraph routes under attack east and west of Salt Lake City; and the Oregon Trail from South Pass to the Snake all but closed. Colonel Connor first focused his attention on the Northwestern Shoshonis. A company was rushed to garrison Fort Bridger. Maj. Edward McGarry of the 2d California Cavalry rode north with a battalion to secure the release of a 10-year-old white boy held by Bear Hunter, a militant Northwestern Shoshoni chief. In Cache Valley the troops encountered Bear Hunter's people, shots were exchanged, hostages taken, and the boy turned over to the soldiers by the Indians. [7]

3. Bloodshed Inflames Passions

During the autumn of 1862 there had been a significant increase in traffic through the Northwestern Shoshoni country, as miners traveled back and forth between the Grasshopper Creek and Beaverhead diggings in Idaho Territory and Salt Lake City and the other Mormon settlements. The Montana Trail, north of Franklin, crosses Bear River, near a favored winter camp site used by Bear Hunter and his people. [8]

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On January 14, 1863, an express rider returned to Salt Lake City with word that two expressmen had been killed by Shoshonis on the Cache Valley road. He reported that the Shoshonis had sworn "to avenge the blood of their comrades" slain by soldiers led by Major McGarry at Bear River Ferry in early December 1862, and that the "spiteful" Indians planned to "kill any white man they should meet with on the north side of Bear River, till they should be fully avenged." Commenting on the murders, the editor of the Deseret News advocated that steps be taken to "dispose them to peace." [9]

On January 5, 1863, ten miners traveling south on the Montana Trail were rumored to have been murdered by Indians. Some 24 hours later, eight men en route to Salt Lake City lost their way and struck the Bear River opposite the village of Richmond. While three of the party crossed the river to seek assistance from the villagers, a number of Indians arrived at the camp, drove off their stock, robbed the wagons, and behaved "very discourteously to the five men." Following the return of the trio, the travelers prevailed on the Indians to return some of their livestock and crossed three wagons to the river's east side. The Indians then opened fire from the west bank and killed John H. Smith. Upon reaching Salt Lake City, one of the survivors signed an affidavit before the Territorial Chief Justice describing Smith's murder. Whereupon, the Chief Justice issued a warrant for the arrest of Bear Hunter, Sanpitch, and Sagwich of the Northwestern Shoshonis and ordered the Territorial marshal to seek the assistance of Colonel Connor to "effect the arrest of the guilty Indians." [10]

B. Colonel Connor Takes the Field1. Connor Gets a Court Order

Colonel Connor welcomed the court order, because, upon receipt of word of the attacks, he had made plans for a punitive expedition northward to hammer the Cache Valley Shoshonis. He accordingly told the marshal that "my arrangements for our expedition are made, and that it was not my intention to take any prisoners" The colonel, in his official report, noted:

Being satisfied that they [the Indians] were part of the same band who had been murdering emigrants on the overland mail route for the past fifteen years and [were] the principal actors and leaders in the horrid massacre of the past summer, I determined, although the weather was unfavorable to an expedition, to chastise them if possible.

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Connor, in planning the expedition, had for his guidance an order issued by Headquarters, Department of the Pacific, dated April 7, 1862, reading: "Every Indian captured in this district during the present war who has been engaged in hostilities against whites, present or absent, will be hanged on the spot, women and children in all cases being spared." [11]

Colonel Connor, apprised that Chief Sanpitch of the Northwestern Shoshoni had traveled down from Bear River to meet with Mormon Leader Brigham Young, became concerned that the Indians might learn of the proposed expedition, relocate their winter encampment, and deprive his California Volunteers of their opportunity for some "Indian killing." An early advocate of carrying the war to the Indians after they had settled into their winter villages, so that the warriors, if attacked, would be encumbered by their women and children, Connor, on January 19, alerted his soldiers to be ready to take the field on a moment's notice. A Mormon leader, learning of this, cautioned that the expeditions then outfitting would catch some friendly Indians, murder them, and let the "guilty scamps remain undisturbed in their mountain haunts." [12]

2. The March North

On the morning of January 21, Capt. Samuel W. Hoyt of Company K, 3d California Infantry, took the field. His command consisted of 69 foot soldiers, two 6-pounder mountain howitzers, and 15 wagons loaded with baggage and 20 days rations for his troops and grain for the animals. It was snowing as the little column tramped out of Camp Douglas and took the road leading northward. To keep the Indians from learning of the army's plans, stories were circulated that Hoyt's people were en route to protect wagons hauling grain down to Salt Lake City from Cache Valley.

Captain Hoyt and his troops made no effort to conceal their movements. They marched by day and camped early. If seen by the Indians, their sighting reinforced the stories that had been planted that this was another detachment sent north to provide security to a slow-moving wagon train. Nightfall on the 26th found Hoyt's company camped at Mendon, where the troops "laid over" a day. [13]

Meanwhile, Colonel Connor had taken the field with his main column--220 hard-riding officers and men of Companies A, H, K, and M, 2d California Cavalry. It was long after dark on

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January 24 when the horse soldiers rode out. Unlike the infantry, the cavalry was to conceal its movements from friend and foe until within one day's march of the Bear River village, tactics that the editor of the San Francisco Bulletin believed would prevent the Indians from "skedadling to the mountains." The cavalymen were armed with revolvers and carbines, were supplied with ammunition, and each man carried three days' cooked rations in his haversack.

Connor and his flying column, traveling only at night, reached Mendon on the 27th, where they rendezvoused with Captain Hoyt's command. The weather had turned bitterly cold, and snow blanketed the ground in some places--such as the divide between Brigham City and Cache Valley--to a depth of four feet. [14]

The soldiers spent the day drawing rations and squaring their gear away. They had been joined by Orrin P. Rockwell, an experienced Mormon scout. Rockwell had heard of Shoshoni boasts that they would "thrash the soldiers and cautioned Colonel Connor that these Native Americans, numbering some 600 fighting men, had "thrown up intrenchments to protect their village." A miner, recently back from the diggings, had spoken with several Northwestern Shoshonis, and they had told him they had no grudge against the Mormons, but they intended to revenge themselves on white travelers for "injustices" inflicted on them by Major McGarry and his cavalry.

Captain Hoyt and his infantrymen, escorting the howitzers and wagons, departed from Mendon at midnight on the 27th. Colonel Connor and the four companies of horse soldiers broke camp many hours later. Hoyt's people, marching 34 miles in 17 hours, entered Franklin, 12 miles from the Bear River village, at dusk on the 28th. [15]

3. The Soldiers Reach Franklin and Connor Prepares
a Surprise Attack

Not long before the soldiers came into sight, one of the villagers, in obedience to Bishop Preston Thomas' instruction, had sacked up nine bushels of wheat to turn over to three Shoshonis sent by Chief Bear Hunter. The wheat was an increment on the tribute the Mormon farmers were in habit of paying to the Native Americans to keep the peace. Two of the three horses had been loaded, when the farmer looked to the south and saw soldiers approaching. He warned the Indians, saying, "Here come the

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Toquashes [the Shoshonis' name for the soldiers] maybe, you will all be killed." The Indians answered, "Maybe Toquashes be killed too." Whereupon, the trio, not waiting for the third horse to be loaded, mounted their ponies and, leading the horses, rode out of Franklin, heading northwest toward Bear River. Earlier in the day, Bear Hunter had visited the settlement. Thus the Shoshonis were aware of the presence of Captain Hoyt and foot soldiers, but did not know of the rapid approach of Colonel Connor and his four companies of cavalry, who did not reach Franklin until midnight. [16]

C. The Attack

1. The Approach March

Colonel Connor, to coordinate the marches of his infantry and cavalry and insure that they reached the bluffs overlooking the Bear River encampment at the same time, alerted Captain Hoyt and his infantry, howitzers, and wagons to move out at 1 a.m., on January 29. Hoyt was delayed, while searching for local guides to conduct his column to the ford giving access to Bear Hunter's village. It was 3 a.m. before two scouts were identified and Hoyt's people took up the march. Connor and his four-company cavalry battalion hit the trail at 4 a.m. The horse soldiers, after an eight-mile ride, overtook and passed Hoyt's column, while they slogged through snowdrifts four miles from the river. The teams pulling the howitzers and wagons had lagged far behind the infantry. [17]

2. The Historic Scene

Major McGarry and the vanguard gained the bluffs overlooking Bear River at daybreak. Looking northwest over the river and the bottom beyond, the horsemen saw smoke rising from fires in the Indian village kindled by early risers. Bear River, then as now, flowing from northeast to southwest, meanders across a level flood plain that is about three-quarters of mile across. The river, at the point where the soldiers came out on the bluffs, hugs the eastern escarpment. After coursing westward for about one mile, the river, near Wayland Hot Springs, impinges against a bluff and changes direction, flowing off to the south. The bluffs bounding the bottom to the northwest and southeast rise from 4,500 feet above sea level to 4,700 feet.

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The bluff from where the soldiers surveyed the village was so steep that, except where the Montana road came down off the bench, it would be a hard ride for the cavalry to get down off of it. Bear River, at this season of the year at the site of the ford, is about 175 feet in width and three to four feet deep. Beaver Creek (fated to be hereinafter known as Battle Creek) merges its waters with Bear River upstream from Wayland Hot Springs.

Beaver Creek--flowing through a steep-sided hollow--debouches into the Bear River bottom opposite the bluff from where Major McGarry studied Bear Hunter's village. After entering the bottom, Beaver Creek changes course from southeast to southwest, the waterway paralleling Bear River to its confluence with the larger stream, downriver from today's U.S. Highway 91 bridge. Beaver Creek, for much of the forthcoming fight, provided the Shoshonis with a strong defensive position against an attacking force crossing at the ford. Cedar Point, a steep headland, juts out into the valley and is fronted on the northeast and southwest by Beaver Creek. A flat flood plain about one-third mile across separates Bear River and Beaver Creek. [18]

A correspondent for the San Francisco Bulletin had accompanied Colonel Connor. He informed readers that the Beaver Creek ravine varied in depth from 6 to 12 feet and was 30 to 40 feet wide, with its eastern bank nearly vertical. The Shoshonis had cut three openings through this bank to enable them to ride their ponies in and out of the village. There were erroneous reports by people who should have known better that the Native Americans had constructed field fortifications--rifle-pits and trenches--into this embankment to strengthen their position. Upon closer study it was found that these "works" were steps dug into the cutbank to afford ease of access to and from the ravine.

Colonel Connor observed, in his "After Action Report," that "under the embankments they [the Indians] had constructed artificial covers of willows thickly woven together, from behind which they could fire without being observed." Willows, some as much as 20 feet in height, choked the Beaver Creek bed and extended up and over the west bank and beyond to the steep bluffs southwest of Cedar Point. [19]

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Hunter's Village and People

The Shoshoni village, beginning south of Cedar Point, bounded Beaver Creek and extended southward for several hundred yards. The village pony herd was pastured on the meadow west of the creek and east of the bluffs. The village numbered 75 lodges, housing about 450 Shoshoni men, women, and children. The site--with the hot springs, bluffs, lush meadows, and windbreaks--had for years been a popular winter campground.

The Shoshonis, alerted to the approach of the soldiers by Chief Sagwich, milled about outside their lodges. They anticipated that the Army officers would follow their usual policy by demanding that the Indian leaders surrender those guilty of recent murders, or, at worst, demand hostages until a parley could resolve outstanding differences. The Shoshoni leaders underestimated their enemy and Colonel Connor's determination to employ maximum force to make the roads and trails of Utah Territory secure to travelers. Bear Hunter's and Sagwich's people, in the face of this threat, would have welcomed the support of Chief Pocatello, but Pocatello and his people had left the village on the 28th. [20]

4. Major McGarry's Battalion Meets the
Northwestern Shoshonis

Colonel Connor, concerned that the Indians might escape if he waited for Hoyt's people and the howitzers, told Major McGarry to ford Bear River, and "surround before attacking them, while I remained a few minutes in the rear to give orders to the infantry and artillery." Spearheaded by Companies K and M, the horse soldiers spurred their steeds down the steep escarpment and into the ford. The water was so deep that most of the men, although they flexed their knees, got their feet wet. Pvt. John R. Lee of Company K recalled, "That was a bad looking river, half frozen over and swift. The horses did not want to go in. Two old boys got thrown by their horses." West of the river, the California Volunteers entered a meadow some 400 to 500 yards across, bounded by the river at their rear and Beaver Creek and Cedar Point to their front. Out from the ravine to meet the on-coming soldiers sallied 50 warriors, some on horseback and the rest afoot. And, as Connor, who had not yet crossed the river, was told by Major McGarry, "with fiendish malignity waved the scalps of white women and challenged the troops to battle." [21]

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The Bulletin's war correspondent informed his readers:

Here redskins were evidently full of good humor and eager for the fray. One of the chiefs was galloping up and down the bench in front of his warriors, haranguing them and dangling his spear on which was hung a female scalp in the face of the troops, while many of the warriors sang out: "Fours right, fours left. Come on, you California sons of b----s" [22]

5. Bear Hunter and His Warriors More Than
Hold Their Own

Major McGarry's response was predictable. Seeing that the village was too extensive to surround with his force, many of whom were straggling across the ford, McGarry ordered his cavalymen to advance. Numbers were called and the men dismounted. Every fourth man was designated as a horse-holder, and the volunteers deployed as skirmishers, with Company K on the left and Company M on the right. The Shoshonis fired first and, after wounding a soldier, withdrew, taking shelter with the rest of their fighting men behind the natural parapet (firing step) formed by the east bank of Beaver Creek. The soldiers scrambled for cover and returned the Indians' fire. Companies A and H, having forded the river and dismounted, reinforced their comrades. The Shoshonis made good use of the terrain and ground cover to inflict a number of casualties on the Californians. A mounted officer, Lt. Darwin Chase, of Company K, was wounded. During the first 20 minutes of the savage fire fight, the Shoshonis more than held their own--killing at least 7 and wounding 20.

6. Colonel Connor Calls Up His Reserves and
Redeploys His Command

Colonel Connor now crossed Bear River, found that his men were falling thick and fast, saw that the Native Americans had the advantage of position, and called to Major McGarry to pull back. The soldiers retired by squads and reestablished their firing line some distance from the Beaver Creek ravine. Connor told McGarry to take a score of men, move to the right, and outflank the Shoshonis. McGarry, followed by 20 dismounted cavalry and covered by the fire of the men on the skirmish line, gained the bluff on the east side of Beaver Creek upstream from the village. Coincidentally, Captain Hoyt and the men of Company K, 3d California Infantry, had reached the Bear River ford. Harking to

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the sounds and shouts of battle, Hoyt and some of his soldiers rushed into the icy river, found an impassible barrier, and floundered back up onto the bank. The day was bitter cold and the foot soldiers suffered as their wet uniforms froze to their persons.

Colonel Connor was omnipresent. Recognizing the infantry's predicament, he ordered some of the horse-holders to take their steeds and transport Hoyt and his people across Bear River. Hoyt's infantry, after dismounting, hastened to the right and reinforced McGarry on the bluffs. While McGarry deployed Company K, his dismounted cavalry, from their commanding ground, opened a deadly enfilade fire on the left flank of the Indians posted in the Beaver Creek ravine and into the nearby lodges.

Colonel Connor now took action to perfect his strategy by undertaking a double envelopment of the village. If successful, there would be no escape for Bear Hunter and his people. Lt. Cyrus D. Clark, followed by Company K, 2d California Cavalry, moved off the firing line and headed downstream. He posted his men astride Beaver Creek near where it flowed into Bear River, with the mission of preventing an Indian breakout in the direction of Wayland Hot Springs. Lt. John Quinn, with those men of Company A who had not dismounted, crossed Beaver Creek upstream from Clark's people and deployed his troops into line preparatory to attacking north and east against the village's right and rear.

7. The Tide of Battle Turns

Major McGarry's reinforced company, their deadly enfilading fire having given them the "bulge," advanced down the Beaver Creek hollow. The bluffs commanding the hollow gave the Californians favorable ground from which to cover their comrades as they fought their way into the northern end of the village. Galvanized into action by McGarry's thrust, Lieutenant Quinn's dismounted troopers closed on the village from the opposite direction--the southwest. Along the skirmish line east of the Beaver Creek ravine stronghold, Capt. George F. Price's men took advantage of the situation to again fight their way out into the meadow, from where they had been driven earlier by the Shoshonis' well-aimed small-arms fire. The fight, as the soldiers entered the village, became hand-to-hand, in which the well-armed cavalry employed their revolvers with deadly effect. [23]

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Some of the officers were armed with six-shot revolvers. A participant recalled that "Captain McLean had a pistol shot out of his right hand ... and while drawing another with the left received a bullet in the groin...." [24] Although the Native Americans defended their lodges and families with "dogged obstency," the tide of battle turned decisively against them. The Californians "settled themselves down to the work before them, as a dray horse would set himself to pull his load up hill." Along the firing line east of the village, Captain Price saw eight of his men cut down, either killed or mortally wounded, but the Indians to their front suffered frightful losses. After the battle, Price's troopers counted 48 Indian dead heaped about.

8. The Fight Becomes a Massacre

Colonel Connor was with Price's soldiers when a number of warriors cut their way out of the ravine that had once afforded security, but had now become a slaughter pen. "A wild yell from the troops" alerted Connor to the situation, and he called for Lt. George D. Conrad of Company H to take a detachment, secure their mounts from the horse-holders, and cut off the Indians as they sought to escape across Bear River. Lieutenant Quinn and his mounted people joined in the pursuit. With the Californians hard on their heels, the Shoshonis sought cover along the willow-lined river bank. Here there was more "war to the knife and the knife to the hilt." Quinn's horse was shot from under him, Maj. Patrick A. Gallagher and Capt. David Berry were seriously wounded, and "one of the men close by Colonel Connor was shot from his horse." A number of Indians attempted to swim across the river. Many of them were shot by soldiers posted on the west bank. Others were swept downstream to find refuge in the thickets or drowned in the icy current. A few escaped by scrambling up the bluffs west of Beaver Creek. [25]

The fight lasted about four hours, and, by 10 a.m., the blood-letting ceased. Surgeon R.K. Reed had located his aid station near the horse-holders' line, but much of the combat raged at such short ranges that wounded soldiers were left where they dropped. The day was bitter cold and a number of the Californians had frozen toes and fought with "fingers so frozen that they could not tell they had a cartridge in their hands unless they looked" The San Francisco Bulletin's war correspondent, an eyewitness, informed his readers, "The carnage presented in the ravine was horrible. Warrior piled on warrior horses mangled and wounded in every conceivable form, with here and there a squaw and papoose, who had been accidentally killed...." [26]

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D. The Toll in Dead and Wounded

1. The Military's

The battle ended. The Army officers assembled their companies and rolls were called. Colonel Connor found that, of the 200 soldiers engaged, he tallied 14 dead enlisted men, and 4 officers and 49 soldiers wounded--of whom 1 officer and 6 men subsequently died of their injuries.

2. A Grim and Terrible Body Count

Body counts have always been important, and Connor promptly called for one. He reported:

We found 224 bodies on the field. ... How many more were killed than stated I am unable to say, as the condition of the wounded [Californians] rendered their immediate removal a necessity. I was unable to [personally] examine the field. I captured 175 horses, some arms, destroyed over seventy lodges, a large quantity of wheat and other provisions, which had been furnished [the Shoshonis] by the Mormons; left a small quantity of wheat for the sustenance of 160 captive squaws and children, whom I left on the field. [27]

Lt. Col. George S. Evans of the 2d California Cavalry, who had remained at Camp Douglas and was not on the scene, relying on reports of his officers who were there, wrote, "we succeeded in almost annihilating the band; having killed some two hundred and seventy-five--224 bodies were found on the field and as many as fifty fell in the river.... " [28]

James D. Doty, representing the Department of the Interior as superintendent for Indian Affairs in Utah Territory, informed his superiors in Washington that Shoshoni survivors of the massacre reported that 255 men, women, and children were killed in the engagement on Bear River.

3. Californians Report No Adult Male Wounded or Prisoners

A review of the reports by the white establishment of their body counts, many more of which are referenced by Brigham D. Madsen in his definitive account of the conflict, found in The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre, reveals that neither the

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senior officers, nor the reports and stories told by other whites, reference any Native Americans wounded or any male Shoshonis captured. The usual percentage of killed to wounded in battles fought during the Civil War, contemporary with Bear River, was four wounded to one dead. Connor and his soldiers evidently believed that the only good male Indian was a dead Indian. While neither Connor nor Evans listed any Native American women or children in their body counts, Agent Doty does. [29]

4. How Many Dead Women and Children?

Just how many women and children were killed or wounded in the fight, the closing phases of which took place in the willow thickets and about the lodges, has never been determined. Abraham C. Anderson, in an article published in the Union Vedette on January 29, 1867, the fourth anniversary of the attack, recalled that "as soon as the squaws and children ascertained that the soldiers did not desire to kill them, they came out of the ravine and quietly walked to our rear." Anderson also noted that "three women and two children were accidentally killed." [30] A New York Times correspondent, relying on the stories of white participants, opined that ten women had been slain. [31] A Native American told Samuel Roskelly, a Cache Valley settler, that at least 30 women had been killed by the soldiers "and many children." Another Cache Valley Mormon, John Martineau, reported 90 women and children dead. [32] The correspondent for the Bulletin informed his readers in an article published in the San Francisco Alta California that 120 women and children had survived the battle. [33]

Only about a score of male Shoshonis escaped the holocaust. Numbered among the dead so-called warriors were a proper ratio of hoary-haired men in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. Chief Bear Hunter and subchief Lehi had been killed and the former's body mutilated. Chief Sagwich escaped when he "tumbled into the River and floated down under some brush and lay there til night, and after dark he and some more warriors ... took off two of the soldiers horses and some of their own ponies and went north." [34]

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E. The Californians Return to Camp Douglas and Colonel Connor Gets a Star

The Californians spent the night of January 29, 1863, camped in the Bear Creek bottoms. The wounded were sheltered in tents and the remainder of the battalion huddled and bedded down around roaring fires fed by poles taken from the Shoshonis' lodges. Colonel Connor had dashed off a message to Colonel Evans at Camp Douglas, informing him of the victory and directing him to rush north a relief column with medicines and rations to assist the returning troops. Sleds and teams were requisitioned from the Franklin and Richmond Mormons to haul the dead, wounded, and those with the worst cases of frostbite south to Camp Douglas.

On the morning of the 30th, following arrival of the sleds and their drivers, Connor's column crossed Bear River. Nightfall found the soldiers camped at Franklin. Six more days passed before the troops arrived back at Camp Douglas. Connor's attack on and destruction of Bear Hunter's people and village earned for him a commendation from the War Department and prompt promotion to brigadier general in the U.S. Volunteers to rank from March 30, 1863. [35]

F. General Connor's Mailed Fist Brings Peace to Utah Territory

General Connor retained the initiative gained at Bear River. In May, a one-company post, Camp Connor, was established at Soda Springs, an Oregon Trail landmark, where the wagon road broke away from Bear River to reach the divide that gave access to the upper reaches of the Blackfoot River. Patrols operating out from Camps Connor and Douglas and Fort Bridger from late spring until autumn of 1863 harassed the Idaho Territory Shoshonis and Bannocks. Soon these chiefs, fearing the fate of Bear Hunter and his Northwestern Shoshonis, opted for peace. Connor also carried the war to the Utes and Gosiutes, who had been striking at traffic traveling the Overland Mail Route between Salt Lake City and Fort Ruby.

At councils held during the summer of 1863, General Connor and Superintendent Doty made peace with nearly all the Native Americans of Utah. By October 1863, they notified the Overland Mail Company that all Indians in Utah Territory were at peace and "all routes of travel through Utah Territory to Nevada and California, and to the Beaver Head and Boise river gold mines, may now be used with safety."

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2. Stan Hoig, The Sand Creek Massacre (November 1961), p. 135.
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4. Brigham D. Madsen, The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre (Salt Lake City, 1985), pp. 21-23.
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6. Robert M. Utley, Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indians, 1848-1868 (New York, 1967), pp. 222-223.
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8. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 177.
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10. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 178.
11. The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (73 vols. 128 pts. Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. 1, Vol. L., pt. 1, pp. 187, 992.
12. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 179; Deseret News, Feb. 4, 1863; Sacramento Union, Jan. 31, 1863.
13. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 179-180; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L., pt. 1, p. 185.
14. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 181-182; San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 20, 1863; Official Records, Ser. I., Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 185.
15. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 182; Deseret News, Jan. 28, 1863.
16. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 182; Newell Hart, The Bear River Massacre (Preston, Idaho, 1982), pp. 73-75.

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17. Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 185; Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 183.
18. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 183-185; Hart, Bear River Massacre, p. 254.
19. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 185; San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 20, 1863.
20. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 185-186; New York Times, Feb. 25, 1863; Edward T. Barta, "Battle Creek: The Battle of Bear River," M.A. thesis (Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho), pp. 86, 93.
21. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 186; Hart, Bear River Massacre, p. 130; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, pp. 185-186.
22. San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 20, 1863.
23. Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, pp. 185-186; Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 186-188; Barta, "Battle Creek: The Battle of Bear River," pp. 121-130.
24. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 188.
25. Ibid., 188-189; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 186; Barta, "Battle Creek: The Battle of Bear River," pp. 121-130; San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 20, 1863.
26. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 189; San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 20, 1863; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 186.
27. Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 187; Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 225-229; Hart, Bear River Massacre, pp. 112-115.
28. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, p. 190.
29. Ibid., 190-191.
30. Ibid., 191; Union Vedette, Jan. 29, 1867.
31. New York Times, Feb. 25, 1863.
32. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 189-190.

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33. Alta California, Feb. 17, 1863.
34. Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, p. 187; Mae T. Perry, "Massacre at Boa Ogoi," The Bear River Massacre (Preston, Idaho, 1982).
35. Madsen, Shoshoni Frontier, pp. 194-196; Warner, Generals in Blue, p. 87.
36. Utley, Frontiermen in Blue, pp. 224-225; Official Records, Ser. I, Vol. L, pt. 1, pp. 226-228, 229, 527-530; pt. 2, pp. 479, 527-530, 658-659.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The southeast corner of the boundary enclosing the site is located on the west side of the farm road dividing Sections 9 and 10, Township 15 South, Range 39 East, at a point 1,400 feet north of the southeast corner of Section 9. From there--the point of beginning--the East boundary of the site runs north, with the east line of Sections 4 and 9, approximately 7,900 feet to the south side of the east-west farm road that is parallel to and 1,300 feet south of the north boundary of Section 4. The north boundary of the site then extends due west 7,400 feet to intersect the Utah Power and Light power line at the 4,600-foot contour on the escarpment west of Battle Creek; then southwest with the power line to the point where it crosses over a farm road near the 4,700-foot contour; then due west 1,750 feet with the south side of the farm road to its intersection with the north-south county road at the point where Sections 5,6,7, and 8 corner; and then south, with the east side of the aforementioned county road 4,020 feet to a point 1,400 feet north of the southeast corner of Section 7. From here--the southwest corner of the proposed NHL--the line runs due east 10,400 feet to the place of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary, as described, includes the site of the Northwestern Shoshoni Village, the escarpment south of Bear River from where the Californians reconnoitered the village preparatory to attacking, the Soldiers Fords, the Battle (Beaver) Creek ravine and hollow, the area where the Northwestern Shoshonis initially battled and more than held their own against Major McGarry's battalion, the ground where Colonel Connor brought up and deployed reinforcements, the massacre site where the Northwestern Shoshonis sought to escape the fury of the Californians, and the Pioneer Women's Historical Memorial. Homes and improvements, along with roads, irrigation canals and ditches, etc., made in the years since the 1860s to support ranching and farming activities, do not contribute to the national significance of the resources associated with the village, battle, and massacre.